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Report : Petition of the Reps. of W. Slacum

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IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEBRUARY 18, 1850.

Submitted, and ordered to be printed.

Mr. MANGUM made the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill S. No. 120.]

The Committee on Foreign Relations, to whom was referred the petition of the legal representative of William A. Slacum, deceased, report:

That upon a review of the case, they see no reason to dissent from the conclusion of the report made from the Committee on Foreign Relations upon the same subject, on the 3d of March, 1846, but adopt the same, and report a bill in conformity therewith.

IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES—*March 3, 1846.*

Mr. SEVIER made the following report:

The Committee on Foreign Relations, to whom was referred the memorial of the heir and legal representative of the late William A. Slacum, deceased, report:

That it appears by the documents filed in this case, that the late William A Slacum was commissioned by President Van Buren, through his late Secretary of State, Mr. Forsyth, by his letter dated 11th of November, 1835, "to obtain some specific and authentic information in regard to the inhabitants of the country in the neighborhood of the Oregon or Columbia river, and generally all such information in that region, political, physical, statistical, and geographical, as might prove useful or interesting to this government."

That, in pursuance of this commission, Mr. Slacum did, in the year 1836, proceed to the Oregon territory, and there fulfilled his instructions, and, in the year 1837, reported the results of his labors in his narrative, addressed to Secretary Forsyth, filed among the papers, marked B.

The claim for repayment of expenses incurred and paid for the use and benefit of the government is founded upon the following facts:

That, not being able to procure a vessel to convey him from the west coast of Mexico, where he commenced to perform his mission up the coast to the Columbia river, on the 1st of June, 1836, Mr. Slacum provi-

ded himself with mules, provisions, and servants, to perform the land journey to Oregon ; but owing to the difficulties and dangers of the route at that season of the year, (especially the scarcity of water,) he was obliged to abandon it, and proceed by sea, via the Sandwich island. The expenses attending these preparations, loss on resale of mules, &c., and pay of servants, amounting to the sum of \$135, make the first item of his claim. The committee think this item is reasonable, and ought to be allowed.

The second and third items are for freight and insurance paid by Mr. Slacum on \$3,000 in specie, of his own proper funds, conveyed with him to pay his expenses, and all of which was devoted to the use of the United States ; and for interest on \$3,231 of his own funds, paid by him in expenses incurred solely for the use of the government, as admitted in the settlement of his accounts at the Treasury Department. The interest claimed is on this amount from the time he so applied it till it was repaid to him at the settlement of his accounts, upon his return to this city. These items together amount to the sum of \$380, which the committee think ought to be allowed.

The item claimed for expenses of servant from Mexico to this city, the committee think ought not to be allowed, because they believe Mr. Slacum could have dispensed with his services.

The item claiming the amount distributed in presents to Indians and others, for facilities in aid of his duties, the committee think is reasonable and ought to be allowed. It amounts to \$198.

The claim for expenses is comprised in the above items.

The memorialist also prays "such compensation for his services as the Congress may deem them to merit."

Although no remuneration for services was promised to Mr. Slacum by the President, yet the committee think it reasonable and just that some compensation should be allowed on this account. Mr. Slacum appeared to have performed his mission with despatch and fidelity. It was a duty attended with much privation, exposure, and peril ; it was performed during the most inclement season ; and your committee believe it was fruitful of much valuable information to this government, and of great benefit to our citizens inhabiting that territory.

They have reason to believe that the Secretary of State, (Mr. Forsyth) under whose auspices this mission was performed, was well satisfied with its results, and regretted that he had not the power to make Mr. Slacum a suitable compensation for his labors. Nothing has ever been paid to Mr. Slacum or his representative on account of compensation.

In fixing a measure of remuneration, your committee refer to the practice in the Department of State, and find that a bearer of despatches to Europe is allowed \$6 per diem, and all expenses paid from this city until his return. They think that the nature of Mr. Slacum's services entitled him, at the least, to this amount, but his per diem is claimed to commence only from his departure from California, and not from this city, as is customary.

But Mr. Slacum's memorial states that he was, during his mission to Oregon, a purser in the navy of the United States. He was bound, in consideration of his official pay, to render his services to his country ; but, inasmuch as his mission to Oregon was not in the tenor of his duties as purser, your committee think his pay as such was not a fair and reasonable

compensation for those services. There are many precedents in the legislation of Congress for allowing extra compensation to officers of the army and navy for extra services performed even in the sphere of their official duties. Your committee would instance, among others, the case of the officers of the late exploring expedition. But the amount of official pay received by Mr. Slacum during the time he was engaged in his mission to Oregon, your committee think ought to be deducted from the sum allowed for compensation.

With this report your committee submit a bill, drawn in conformity to its conclusions.